

Tim and the Hidden People

All the Fun of the Fair

Sheila K. McCullagh

Illustrated by Pat Cook



All the Fun of the Fair



Sheila K. McCullagh

Illustrated by Pat Cook

Nelson



The day began badly.

There was a fair in the big fairground at the other end of the town. Tim had been looking forward to going to it all the week, but when Saturday came he couldn't go.

"It's no good, Tim," said Aunt May. "I haven't got the money this week. Mr. Bunce hasn't paid his rent. I'm sorry, but you can't go."

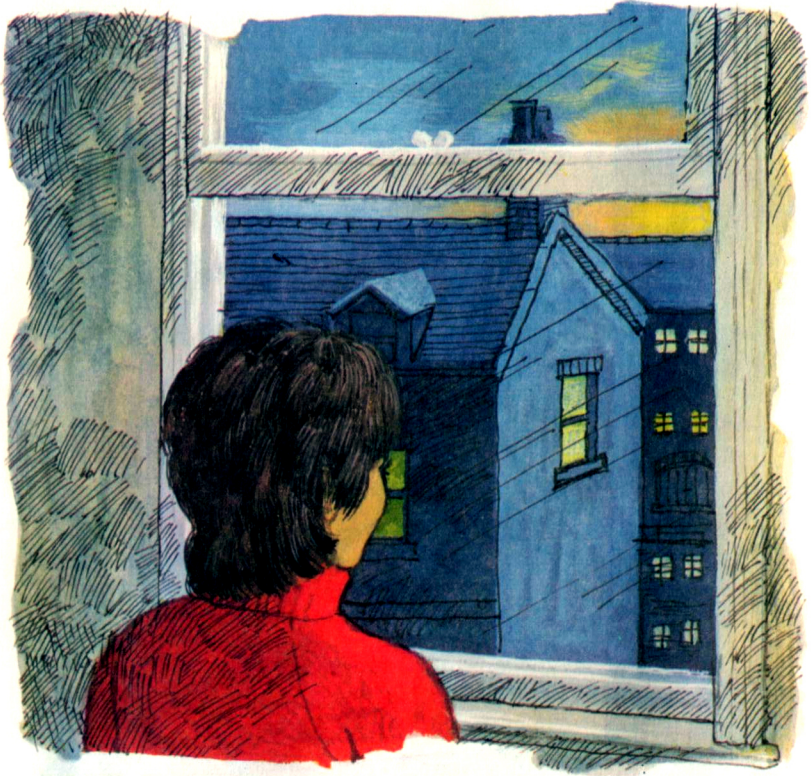
And that was that.



Miss Miff came in to see Aunt May that evening. Tim went upstairs as soon as he had had his tea, to get out of the way.

When he got to the top of the stairs, he opened the door of the back attic, and went in.

He found his way across the dark floor, to the window.



It was a tall house, and Tim looked out over rows and rows of roofs and chimneys. There were windows in some of the roofs, and the lights were beginning to show in the houses. He could hear the traffic. Everyone was going home.

Far away, across the roofs of the houses, he saw the sky over the fairground. The sky was lit up by the lights below.



Tim stood looking until it grew dark. The stars came out. The moon came up behind the house, and shone down over the roofs.

Tim pushed his hands deep into his pockets. His left hand touched the key.

He pulled it out. It was shining like silver, and the end of the key looked just like the head of a cat.

Tim dropped the key back into his pocket, and made his way back to the landing.



As he opened the door of his bedroom, he saw Tobias standing on the bed.

The moon was shining in at the window, and the room was nearly as light as day.



“You *have* been a long time,” said Tobias, jumping down off the bed, and running to the window. “Don’t put on the light. We’re going out. Come on.”

“Come on where?” asked Tim.

“To the fair, of course,” said Tobias. “You want to go to the fair, don’t you? I’ve been waiting for you. I’ve got a broomstick outside the window.”

Tim saw that the window was open.

Tobias jumped up on to the sill.

“Come on,” he said again.



Tim went over to the window and looked out. The broomstick was floating in the air outside, just as it had been before.

“Come on!” said Tobias again. He jumped on to the broomstick.

The moon was just rising over the houses, and it was so bright that Tim could see the stones in The Yard, and the old tree in the middle, almost as clearly as he saw them in the daylight. It looked a long, long way to the ground.



“Do come on, Tim,” said Tobias. “The fair will be over before we get there, if you stand still all the time!”

Tim could see that Tobias was very excited. He began to feel excited himself. He climbed out on to the window-sill, and took hold of the broomstick.

He slid his legs across on to it. Tobias twitched his tail, and they were off.



Tim felt the broomstick rise.

He shut his eyes, and held on. When he opened his eyes again, Tobias was sitting in front of him, and they were sailing along over the roofs of the houses towards the fair-ground.

They crossed lighted streets, with cars and buses and people below, and Tim wondered what the people would think if they looked up, and saw a broomstick sailing over their heads. But nobody did, and the broomstick sailed on.

The wind blew the sound of far-away music across the traffic and the town.



The music grew louder.

They could see the fair-ground now.

There was a big wheel, and two or three merry-go-rounds.

There was a space ship whirling round, and a tower with a slide round the outside.

Over to the left, Tim could see stalls and coconut shies.

The fair-ground was full of people.



The broomstick began to go down.

“Where are we going to land?” asked Tim.
“Everyone will see us.”

“We’re going to land over there, by the caravans,” said Tobias. “The fair people may see the broomstick, but they won’t see us. They can’t. We’re invisible.”

“But I can see you,” said Tim. “And you can see me.”

“That’s because you’ve got the key,” said Tobias. “We’re both invisible. You’ll soon find out. Just you try, and you’ll see.”



The broomstick came down as he spoke, and Tobias jumped off the end. Tim wasn't ready, and he sat down on the ground with a bump as the broomstick landed, and fell over backwards.

When he got up, he saw that Tobias had pushed the broomstick under a big green caravan. The next moment Tobias was sitting on his shoulder, purring.

"This is the way I like to ride," Tobias purred in his ear. "Now – what do you want to do?"

"Are you sure they can't see us?" asked Tim.

"Try it," said Tobias.



Tim stepped out from among the caravans.
He found himself on a path.

A big fat woman was coming towards him.

Tim put his hands behind his ears and pulled
a face at her.

She waddled on, and he had to jump out of
the way, or she would have bumped into him.



“I told you so,” said Tobias in his ear. “It’s much the best way to see things, too. You can go into the tents, and you don’t have to pay anything. But make sure nobody sits on you.”

It took Tim a little time to remember that no one could see him. To begin with, one or two people bumped into him, and someone trod on his toe. They seemed surprised, but they didn’t see Tim, and the crowd was getting thicker.

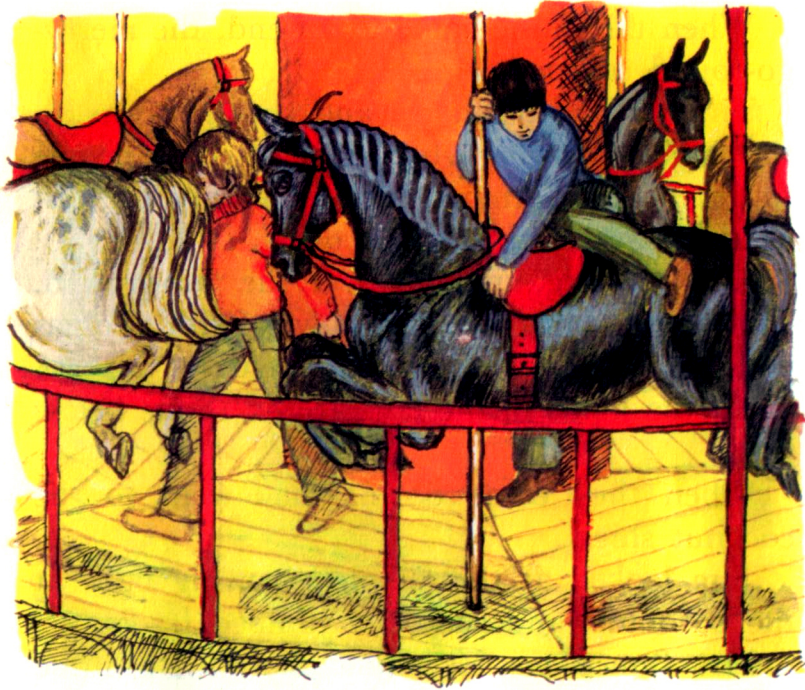


They came to a big merry-go-round. It was the old kind of merry-go-round, with big wooden horses riding round on shining golden poles.

Just as they got to it, the merry-go-round came to a stop.

“Jump on, Tim,” said Tobias. “I love to ride the horses.”

Tim slipped under the rail and on to the merry-go-round, and climbed up on to the back of a big, black horse. It was a very fine horse indeed, with pointed ears and a long tail.



The man standing on the merry-go-round was just going to start it, when another boy came along. He paid his money, and ran over to the big black horse.

Tim remembered just in time that the boy couldn't see him. He slipped off the horse's back, and climbed on to a grey horse near by.

The music played.

The merry-go-round started. Off they went, the horses rising and falling on their golden poles.

When the music came to an end, the merry-go-round stopped.

Tim slid off his horse and slipped away in the crowd to the big wheel. He waited for people to get in, and jumped into an empty car just as the wheel was starting off.

They swung up high over the fair-ground. Tim leant out, looking down, with Tobias purring in his ear with excitement.

All the lights of the fair-ground shone below them.

When they came down, they went to the coconut shies.

Tim looked at the people throwing balls at the coconuts, and suddenly jumped back.

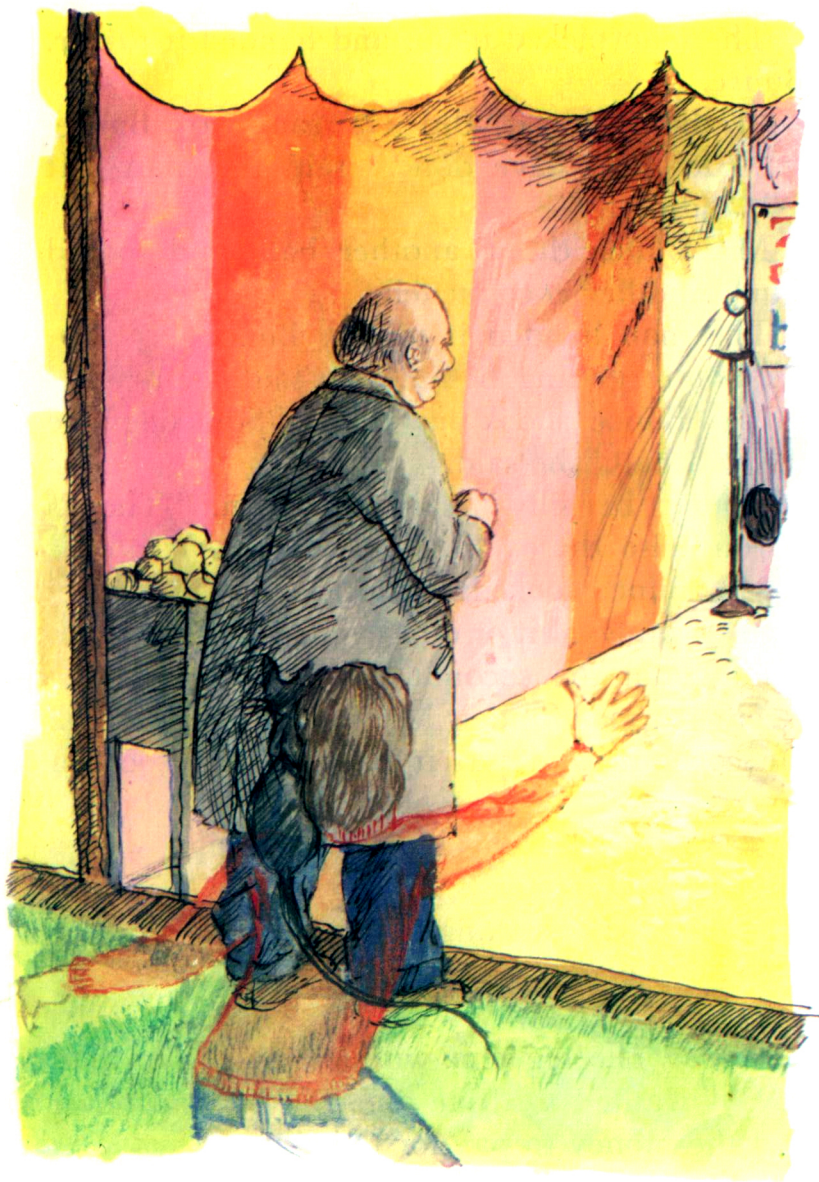
Mr. Bunce was standing there with three balls in his hands.

"Don't jump like that, Tim," Tobias said in Tim's ear. "He can't see you."

Tim stood still, watching.

Mr. Bunce threw the three balls at the coconuts, and missed each time. He took another three balls, and then another three, but he didn't hit even one coconut.

Tim grinned. He took three balls himself, and slipped behind Mr. Bunce. He picked up a ball and threw it. The coconut fell to the ground.



The man picked it up, and handed it to Mr. Bunce.

"I didn't hit it, did I?" said Mr. Bunce.

"You must have done," said the man. "It fell, didn't it?"

Mr. Bunce threw another ball, and so did Tim. Another coconut fell.

The man handed it to Mr. Bunce.

"You're getting better," he said.

Mr. Bunce shook his head. "Someone else threw a ball," he said.

"Don't be silly," said the man. "There's no one else there."

Mr. Bunce looked round.

"Do you want it or don't you?" said the man, holding out the coconut.

Tim slipped under Mr. Bunce's arm, took the coconut, and put it back on the coconut shy.

Mr. Bunce let out a yell and fled.

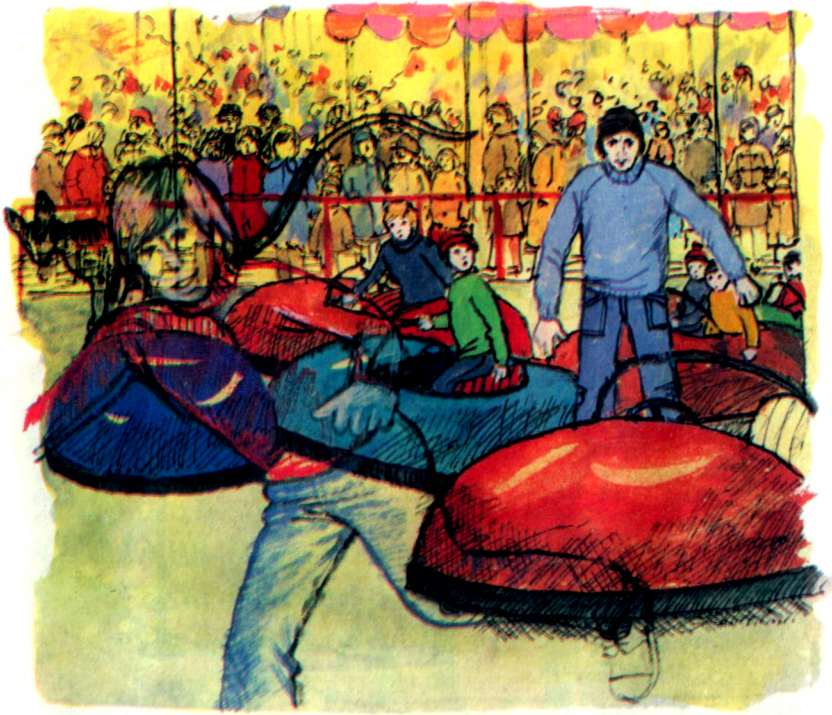
The man stood still, staring.

Tobias was shaking with laughter at the look on the man's face.

Tim slipped away.

He saw the big tent with the cars. Tim had always wanted to drive one, but he had never had the money to pay for the ride.



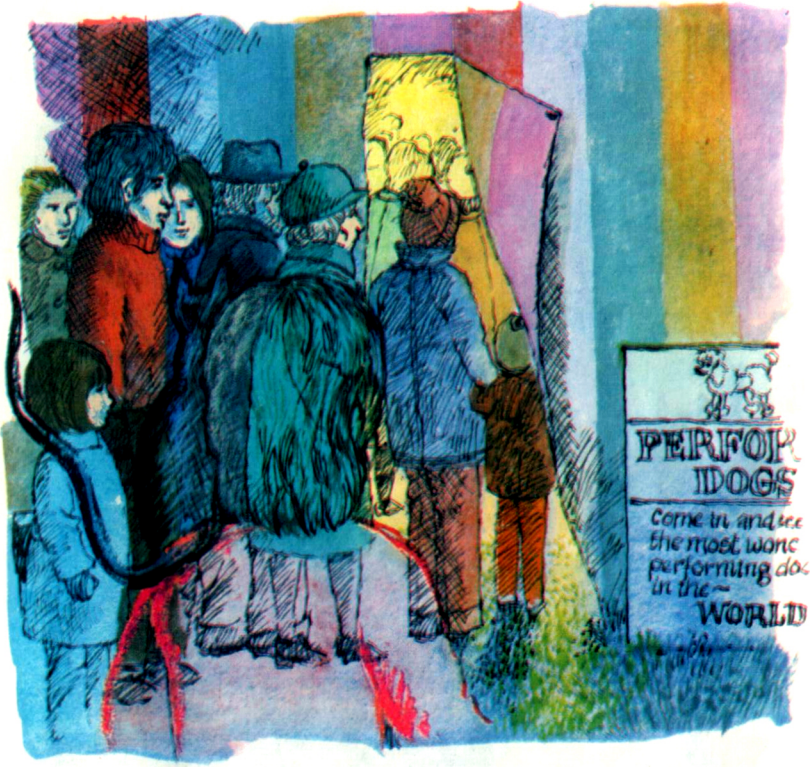


He ran over to one of the cars and climbed in. Tobias was still clinging to his shoulder.

The cars began to move. Tim drove in and out, bumping into some cars, and missing others.

He forgot that everyone could see the car, even if they couldn't see him.

"Look!" shouted a man. "There's a car moving and nobody in it!" The man rushed over to the car, and Tim and Tobias had only just time to jump out and slip away.

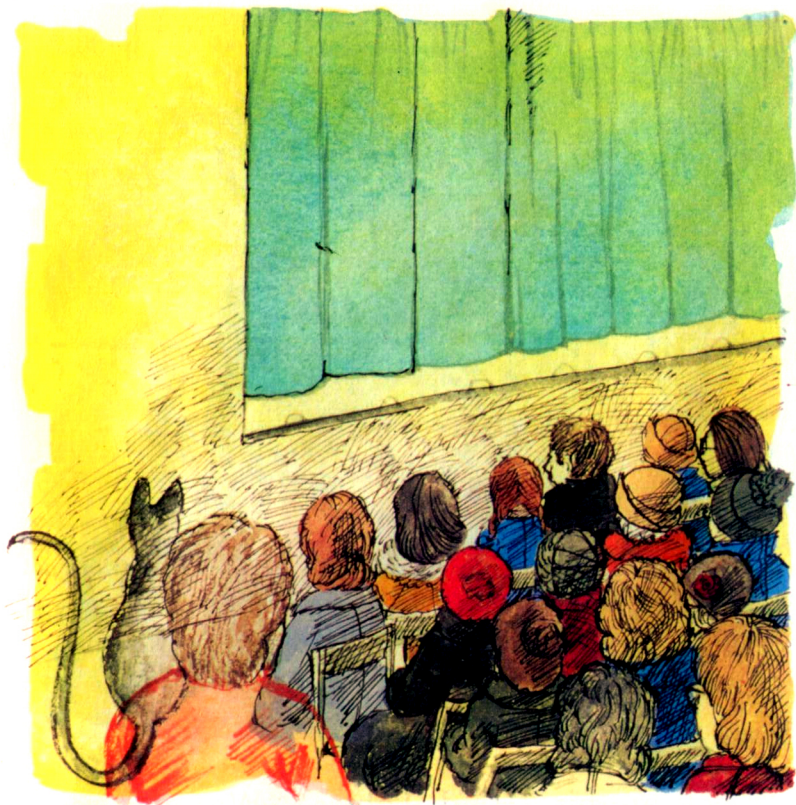


“Look at this!” said Tobias. “We must see this.”

Tim looked. They were standing outside a tent with a board outside.

The board said “Performing Dogs. Come in and see the most wonderful performing dogs in the world.”

People were going into the tent, and Tim joined them, keeping well out of their way.

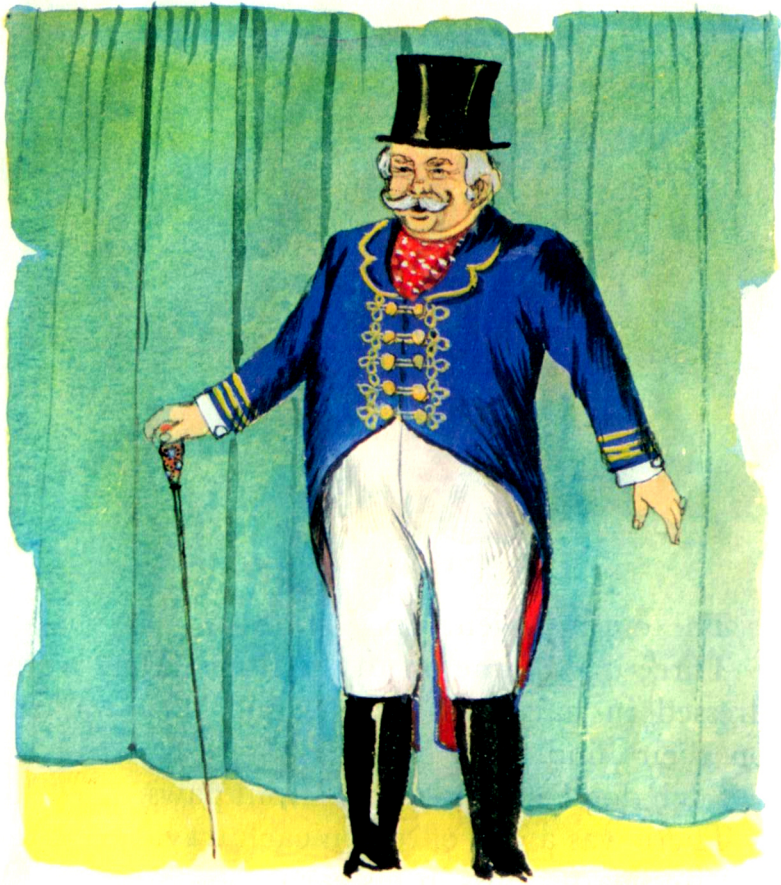


There was a stage inside, with a curtain across, and some chairs.

Tim stood by the wall and waited. He could feel Tobias on his shoulder. Tobias' tail was twitching just a little.

The tent was soon full of people, and every chair was taken.

Tim was glad he had not tried to sit down.



A big man came on to the stage in front of the curtain.

“Ladies and Gentlemen!” he cried. “You will now see the most wonderful show in the fair – the most wonderful performing dogs in all the world!”



The curtain went up.

Three dogs came on to the stage. They were dressed in hats and jackets, and they walked on their hind legs.

Each dog had a tray on its front paws.

There was a cup of tea on each tray.

Tim heard a hiss in his ear.

He felt Tobias' tail give a big twitch.

Tim looked at the stage.

The dogs had stopped dead. They were staring at Tobias.

Suddenly, Tim knew that the dogs could see them.



There was a crash from the stage, as the
trays and cups of tea fell to the ground.
The three dogs began to bark wildly.



Tim turned, and fled along the side of the tent, and out of the door at the back, with Tobias still clinging to his shoulder.

The dogs jumped down from the stage and flew after them. The big man shouted. The people jumped up, and made for the door. Some were shouting at the dogs, and some were shouting at the man, telling him to give them their money back.

The dogs were lost in the crowd, still barking and trying to get out after Tim and Tobias.



Tim ran along the path to the caravans, with Tobias still on his shoulder.

There were shouts behind them, as the three dogs pushed and bit their way out of the tent, and started off down the path after Tim and Tobias.

Tim saw the big green caravan in front of him. He bent down and pulled out the broomstick.

“Quick!” he cried. “Quick, Tobias!”

Tobias was shaking, but Tim knew he was shaking with laughter. Tobias was laughing so hard, that he could only just jump on to the broomstick and twitch his tail.



But Tobias did twitch it, and as he did, the broomstick lifted off into the air, just as the three dogs came barking along the path and leapt up after them.

But the broomstick was already too high and the dogs fell back. All three dogs sat down and pointed their noses to the broomstick, and howled and howled and howled, till the man from the tent came running along, cursing, and sent them running back.



Tobias sat on the end of the broomstick, laughing so hard that he made the broomstick shake.

Tim looked down at the roofs below. The houses were in darkness. The sounds of music and shouting still came from the fair-ground, but the sounds grew fainter behind them as they flew.



It seemed no time at all until the broomstick was bobbing at the window-sill of the tall house in The Yard.

Tim climbed in.

Tobias was still laughing, as he twitched his tail, and the broomstick flew off into the night.

Flightpath to Reading A2

ISBN 0-17-413422-3



9 780174 134220

